GRIEF IS THE PRICE OF LOVE

NATALIE

JANINE

GRIEF IS THE PRICE OF LOVE is a tribute to the deep pain of losing a loved one. It captures the reflective moments that arise in the aftermath of loss and the difficulty of grappling with it while the world around us continues to turn.

Through a combination of traditional art and design practices and alternative visual storytelling, this book covers the journey of reconciling with death and confronting the loss of a loved one head-on. With a stripped-back, intentional, making-based approach, every step of the journey towards acceptance is documented, as well as the equal parts sorrow and calmness that come with it.

GRIEF is the PRice of LOVE

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A Foreword

Entering the final year of my undergrad, I lost my grandmother a bit unexpectedly, knowing one day it would happen considering her journey with leukemia. Still, nevertheless, I was caught off guard.

Life kept moving, as it, unfortunately, does amidst loss, and before I knew it, I was in the middle of my classes and past the deadline to drop out without financial penalty. So here is where I find myself: at the end of my undergraduate program, having spent an entire academic year unable and unwilling to incorporate my work into my long list of interests or beef up a professional portfolio.

I spent an entire semester working in a different area of research, looking at community development in Vancouver, a notoriously heartfelt and simultaneously cutthroat city, noticeably obsessed with the details of the lives of my community submitters rather than the content of their stories. I spent an entire semester looking into other people's thoughts instead of the head full of them that was sitting on my shoulders.

Lost directionally and with a loss on the mind, I have packed a year's worth of grief into explorations of the feelings and effects over a handful of months, culminating in what you hold in your hands right now.

After packing my world post-loss with as much as possible regarding work, doing favours for friends, and even travelling, the exhaustion set in with a vengeance. Emotionally and physically spent, I began to slow down (against my will,) leading me to face the massive changes in my life, my resentfulness towards my own family, and the indifference of so many towards grief.

With no other choice but to face my memories as they came, the most I could muster without overloading the senses and filling my schedules to the brim were small repetitive

actions that I could pour all my attention into, allowing a viable way to consciously grieve in a way that was not self-destructive. These three main elements, the function of memory, repetition as a method of meditation, and intentionally slowing down, are the bases of this work in its entirety.

The contents of this book span my entire shift in research on the subject of grief. I looked at the inevitable human experience through my own lens and let it guide my research however it felt fitting. This exploration has culminated in explorations of time-consuming printing techniques, publishing practices, and alternative visual storytelling in an effort to mirror the mental and physical experience of loss through an entrenched design practice.

In exploring the subject of grief and, more specifically, my grief, my (in)ability to tightly control outcomes came out quickly. Focusing all my energy into a wildly different realm of research in my first semester didn't bring out my expected outcomes. When I ran in and out of the hospital on errands for everyone else at my grandmother's bedside, it didn't bring her back. Or do anything to help them feel better. I couldn't control my body when I collapsed at her funeral. When I tried to keep the peace during family arguments, I couldn't mitigate my brother's upset.

All I wanted (and still want) to do was be able to control my surroundings. Slow the rest of the world down enough to catch up. I constantly think about how unfair it is that while I wallow and try to catch up, out of breath as ever, everything else keeps moving.

And if I can't control it, I can at least allow it to guide me.

I want to extend a thank-you in advance to Robin Mitchell Cranfield, whose writing and guidance led me to take the jump to shift my capstone work. Also, I thank Charlotte Falk for noticing early on in the work that I was focused somewhere else, encouraging my decision to take on this new direction, and guiding me in the not-so-simple task of pulling it all together in such a short period.

My grandmother died early on July 1st, 2023.

I said my last goodbye on June 30th, 2023, around 10 pm. The last time I spoke to her face to face was Monday, June 26th, 2023. I got a call from my dad in the morning that she went into cardiac arrest. I can still recall so easily the way he told me, "I'm sorry, Nat," before hanging up to let me join my grandfather and uncle, who were waiting patiently to hear what was happening.

I rushed to the hospital and sat in the waiting room silently with them until, eventually, someone called them out to explain what happened and allow them to see her. The staff wouldn't let me go with them; there were too many people. I sat alone, waiting for the update to come down the line to me. Eventually, it did.

In short, there was no more. Just flying my mom out on a last-minute plane and allowing her to say goodbye before officially letting things go.

The staff eventually decided I was worthy of being with my family. I shuffled my way down what felt like the longest corridor I had ever seen to a mystery phone on the wall; where I mumbled my grandmother's name through the phone, and a door swung open on its own in front of me. Not a person in sight, I shuffled through until someone finally noticed and directed me to a little corner where my family was.

The overwhelming urge to vomit came immediately, despite my beautiful grandmother remaining just as beautiful as ever in that moment. That feeling and the sight of what seemed like a sleeping woman are still some of the only things I can remember from the nine hours I sat with her on and off. Managing my tears enough to be there for my grandfather, who sat asking her why she would leave him.

The emptiness that came from that sight, seeing the loss of one-half of this couple that has for 55 years been wholly joined at the hip and desperately in love, is indescribable.

Despite coming to terms with this all long ago, knowing that if her sickness didn't do it, eventually age would, I couldn't help but think about how, just a mere handful of days ago, she was laughing and reminiscing on her life with me.

After moving back to Vancouver for a period to deal with some flares and new treatments my grandmother was having, I was making regular visits to them at the apartments of the BC Cancer Society where they were staying. I was newly seeing someone, and after he picked me up post-visit, my grandfather caught us while on his afternoon walk to allow my grandmother some rest, now having something to tell her about when she woke up later. She texted me that night to ask me to bring my "friend" next time so they could meet him.

The last time I spoke to my grandmother was June 26th, 2023. I brought my partner, and we walked to a nearby mall filled with dentist's offices, random shady-seeming shops, and a small food court. We sat and had lunch and talked about my grandparents' lives.
My grandmother told my new "friend" how much of a princess she was when she was young, asked my boyfriend questions about his family and work (the standard for the initial interview of the baby of the family's new love interest,) and when I left she made sure to bid me farewell "the French way" to prepare me for my upcoming stint in France.

My whole family had planned a trip to her home village in Portugal to celebrate her and my grandfather's 55th wedding anniversary. They originally meant this trip to be years ago for their 50th, but cancelled it due to her diagnosis. This time around, I had decided to extend my time away and travel through various other countries for the month following the party, and she told me she needed to make sure I knew how to greet people properly "the French way." Four cheek kisses, two on each side.

On that last day I spent with her, she talked nonstop about her party—the dress she would wear and the dress code for the rest of us.

"Send me photos of what you're thinking of wearing so I can make sure it's fancy enough," she told me.

When I woke up the morning of the day, I would later rush to the hospital; I had plans with a close friend for that evening. I woke up with my partner in bed next to me, and I remember telling him that I wasn't sure if I still wanted to go and that the day felt strange, but I didn't know why. That sixth sense is bizarre, isn't it?

My mom arrived and stayed with me the night they let her go. The following day, we packed up and picked up my grandfather and uncle, setting off to the ferry terminal so they could return to my grandparent's apartment to begin making arrangements. They walked away and forgot to say goodbye to me.

I embarked on my hour-long ride home, a drive I do not remember. I returned to my quiet apartment, and my life resumed as it was before. I was now also trying to reconcile with what I had just experienced, alone.

Marseille, France

Let it be Known

Soon after this, my family trip to celebrate my grandparents' anniversary in their home country was changed to a trip to bury my grandmother alongside her parents in her village. Deposits were paid and non-refundable, and with my grandfather's encouragement, I went on my journey for the rest of the month. Everything was said and done.

I took on this trip a small digital camera modelled after the conventions of a traditional film camera—no screen to review the photos after taking them, just a little viewfinder. The results also take after film cameras; lots of light is needed to capture the image, and it can often turn out over or underexposed, and you can frequently find your photos unusable.

The camera processes the photo so slowly that moments can pass quickly; one shot is really all you get. These more traditional characteristics in a digital format allow two excellent advantages to carrying around a film camera. You can cut down on weight and cost. The camera is flat, and all the photos are stored on an SD card. Easier use means more opportunities to capture moments.

This camera came with me on my trip, easy to toss into my little bag when heading out for the day, easy to point and shoot, and offers a more genuine "snapshot in time" because of the grainy quality and strange colouring the photos get from the device.
It gave me a simple method of documenting significant and insignificant things along my travels.

This book contains various photos taken with this camera during my travels immediately after the loss of my grandmother.

On Exformation

“[Exformation is] half of a conceptual pairing, the other half being information.”

Kenya Hara

Renowned Japanese graphic designer, curator and writer, Hara is a graduate of Musashino Art University. Now a professor, he has taught Communication Design and Design Theory in Science for their Design Faculty since 2001.

In *Designing Design*, Kenya Hara discusses the concept of "Exformation" as understanding what little we know.

I'm not sure what I know.

In Designing Design, Kenya Hara discusses the concept of "Exformation" as understanding what little we know.

In life, there are the known knowns, the unknown knowns, and the known unknowns. I'm not sure who said that, but I imagine they would have enjoyed hearing Hara on exformation.

On the note of what we do not know that we don't know, Kenya Hara writes about the commonly thrown-around phrase "I know, I know," noting that conversation only seemingly progresses with its use. Further discussion is halted. Its use feels like people want to limit contact, and so, even if they DO know (know), they don't want to talk, and they have no desire to discuss the topic with someone.

They may want to maintain the upper hand and possess more knowledge than the others. Maybe they want to prove themselves to be on the same level of intelligence. Perhaps they do know and want to keep going with the topic. Inherently, though, the phrase doesn't engage the topic, no more than a "yes, and" (à la improv) might. The depth of conversation is devoid.

When looking at "Who? Why? Where? When? How?" Questions, the exformation is the why. I can talk to loads of people and hear about the "who" in their lives. I know "where" we are discussing, "when" we are discussing, and they tell me "how" they navigate their worlds and their time with others, but the "why" is the one thing that is never fully explained.

"That's just what I do," "Well, I was walking and ran into this old woman," "We live in the same building," these are each an explanation of "why" people have the interactions they do, sure, but they lack motivation. They lack emotional impact; they lack the continuation of the subject. Maybe this is a result of me being in the position of "I know, I know." I have looked to transform the exformation of others into information about them.

Them, not necessarily myself. Does that equate to new exformation about me?

Maybe I am inhibiting the development of my exformation into information, which in turn is inhibiting my understanding of myself and my position.

I don't know what I don't know. But I want to know. Why? Why look to understand strangers? Why not loved ones? Myself?

Alternatively, maybe understanding exformation is simply not the right approach.

Maybe my exformation can just stay exformation.

Barcelona, Catalonia

Marseille, France

Madrid, Spain

What do we Owe Each Other?

I've always noticed the lights in the windows of apartment buildings. While walking home from work at night, I pass a little cluster whose residents seem to be night owls. Most units have lights shining through their windows at all hours of the day (and night).

Something in particular about observing the windows of apartment buildings is the types of lights themselves; each unit has a different tone or colour of light. I enjoy imagining what the inside looks like—a bright blueish-white light at two in the morning, how clinical. Or the warm oranges I'm a fan of, making the glowing curtains seem inviting. Or even the colourful pulsing lights, as if someone is raving in their little Vancouver shoebox. What are all of these people doing in there?

In the same way, I can imagine what people are doing in their apartments based on the colour of their lights, in general, knowing that each

Nice, France

person I see walking down on the sidewalk when I look out from the train is living their own life, with a considerable possibility of wildly fantastic or heartbreaking things happening to them is something that has always itched in my mind. Who are each of them, and what happened to them this morning?

I'm curious about their lives as individuals I'll never see again (or, in the case of the glowing apartment windows, I will never see, period). This curiosity is unavoidable for me, and it makes me wonder if they're looking out at me, walking down the sidewalk or sitting at the edge of my bed, looking out at them and wondering what kind of person I am to be up at that hour. Where am I coming from, and what happened to me this morning?

I've always thought that we all owe each other something as people. Some general respect or courteousness, understanding one another. Even without exchanging words. And maybe that's why I wonder about the lives of others so often, humanizing total strangers as they pass me by. More often lately, I've wondered how I can humanize other people more than those close to me or even myself. Sometimes, you have people so close in life that you leave out details while catching up.
I find family often falls into this category.

Because they're so close, they're almost expected to know what's happening. Or know to ask. Or know to tell. It's a double-edged sword because, in the same way that I might not divulge too freely and expect to be asked, I'm not entirely playing that role for them either.

And so I've begun wondering about the colour of light in their windows as I look out of mine.

Reflections of Now

6-strand embroidery floss on Mohawk Via Vellum paper, Japanese 4-hole stab binding

In an attempt to face the loss in the most straightforward way, I began to visualize it literally by removing my grandmother from family photos over the years. In preparation for her funeral, my mother asked me to set some pictures to music to play at her celebration of life afterwards. Making this book entailed long nights of crying while staring at photos of her in every stage of her life, from just a kid to her relationship with my grandfather, the birth of my mother, then uncle, my brother and I being added to the bunch, and into her older years on to her time with illness.

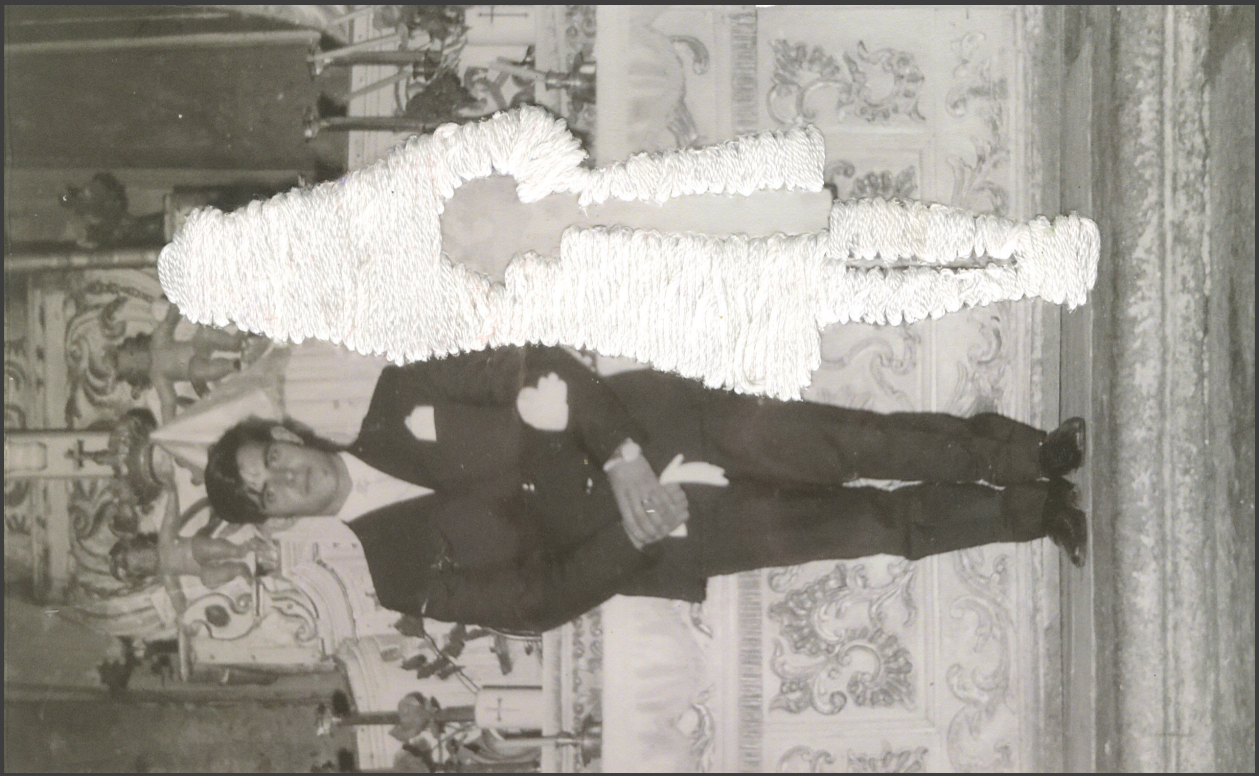
Something this made clear to me was just how many people's lives she was present in, past just my immediate family, and even more so, how much of a life she lived on her own.

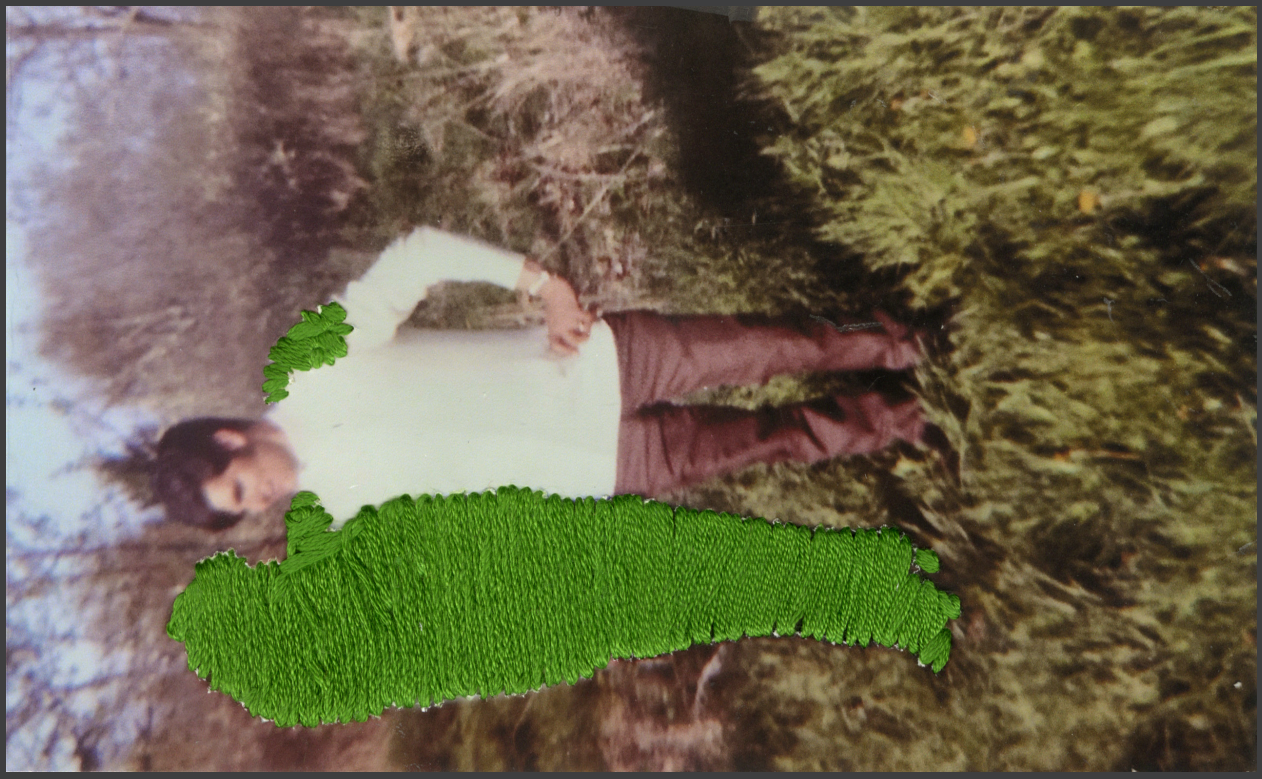
When the video was done, I never watched it again and was still very sensitive to the photos. Because of this, in an exposure-therapy sort of way, I decided to force myself to spend time with them.

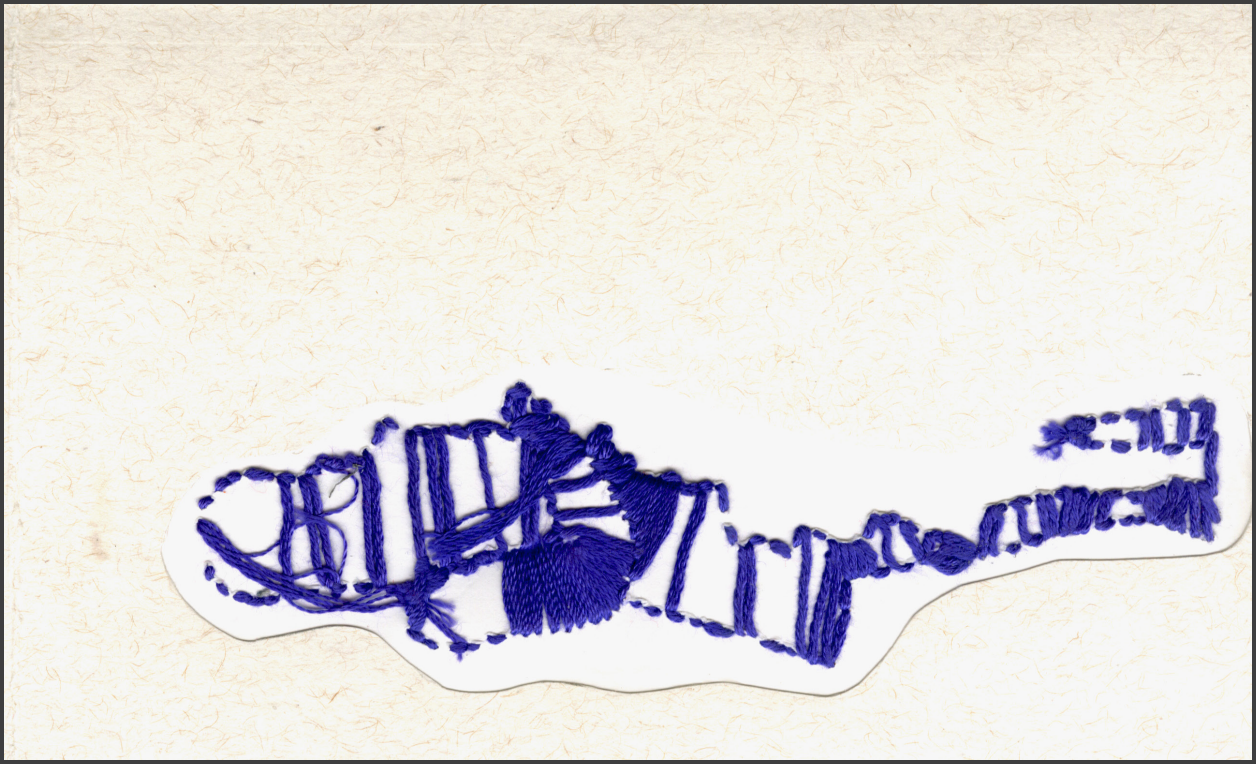
My method of choice for removing them would be embroidery. This time-consuming act was made even more lengthy by choosing to embroider paper photos rather than printed fabric, whose tediousness quickly became a meditative act. The fragility of the punctured paper made the thread come apart numerous times, leading to spending several more hours mending the mistakes and sitting with the photos for a total of three months.

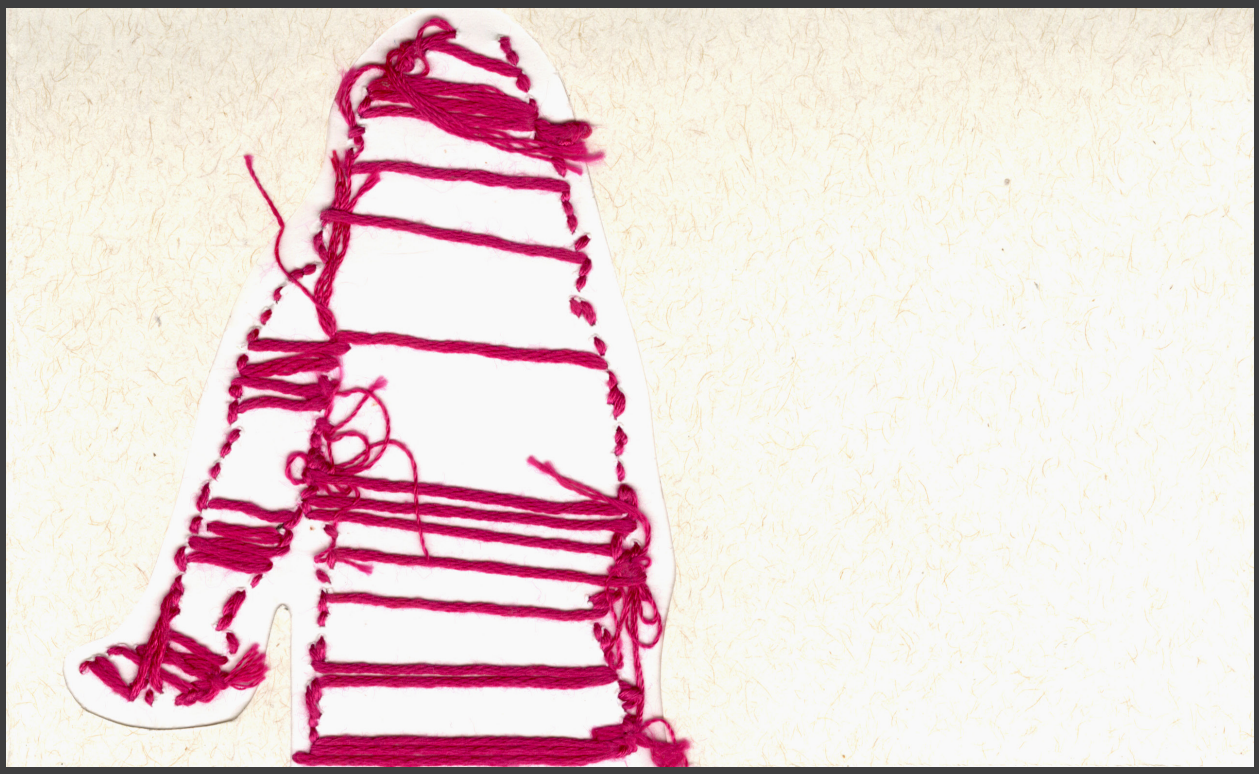
The first item I began creating and the last to be completed, this book starts with a photo of me with my grandparents, and moves through several more in approximate chronological order until the final page, with my grandmother as a young child. Showing how the experience depicted in this work moves past me and through the lives and memories of tens of other people.

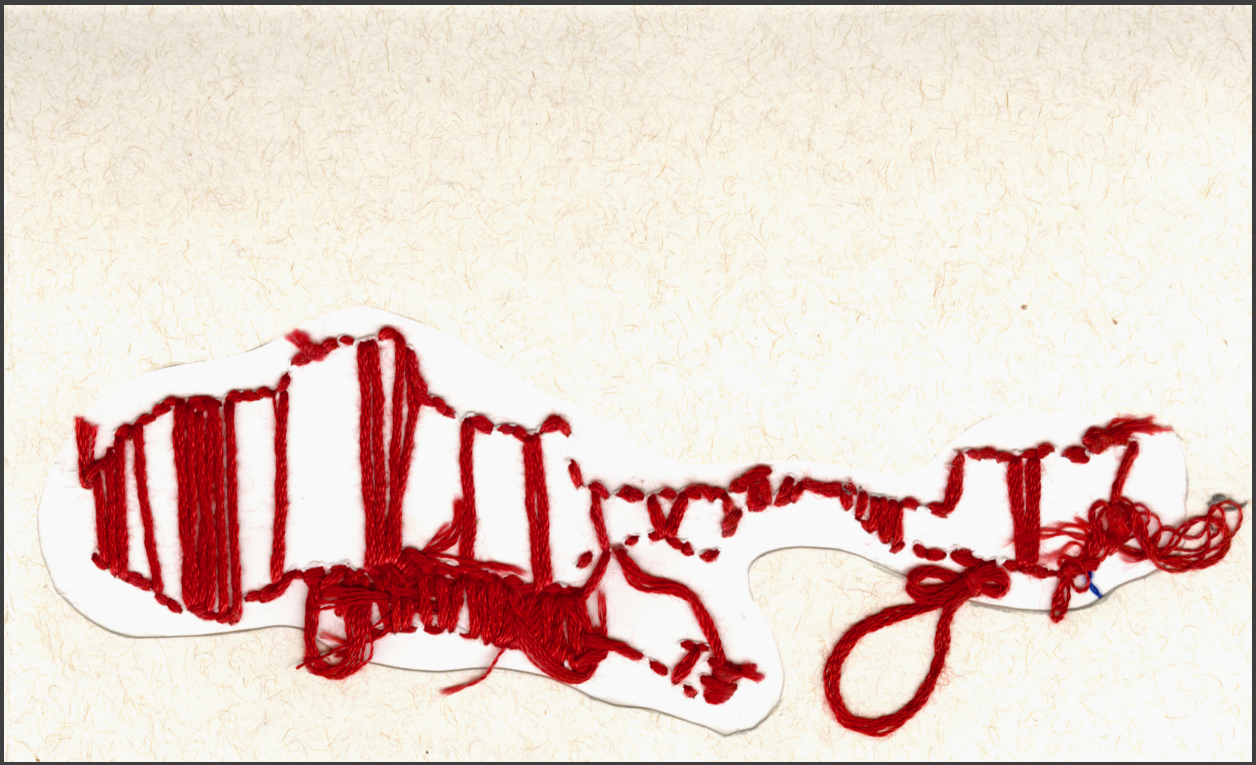
Reflections of Now also explores the confrontation of the inevitable throughout life. In each photo, each person is aware of what will one day happen to themselves and those around them, but if the weight of missing someone right in front of you could have been felt the moment the camera snaps a photo, what would it have changed about our lives? And in the case of memories, how do memories fade over time? We remember people and places, sure, but how much do we remember of them? What is left when a figure is pulled out of a setting, hidden by hours of thread? I can only remember a handful of my grandmother's outfits in these photos, even after staring at them for months. What does that say about me, if anything? And in preserving someone's memory, even the dearest of loved ones, what does it say about those efforts?

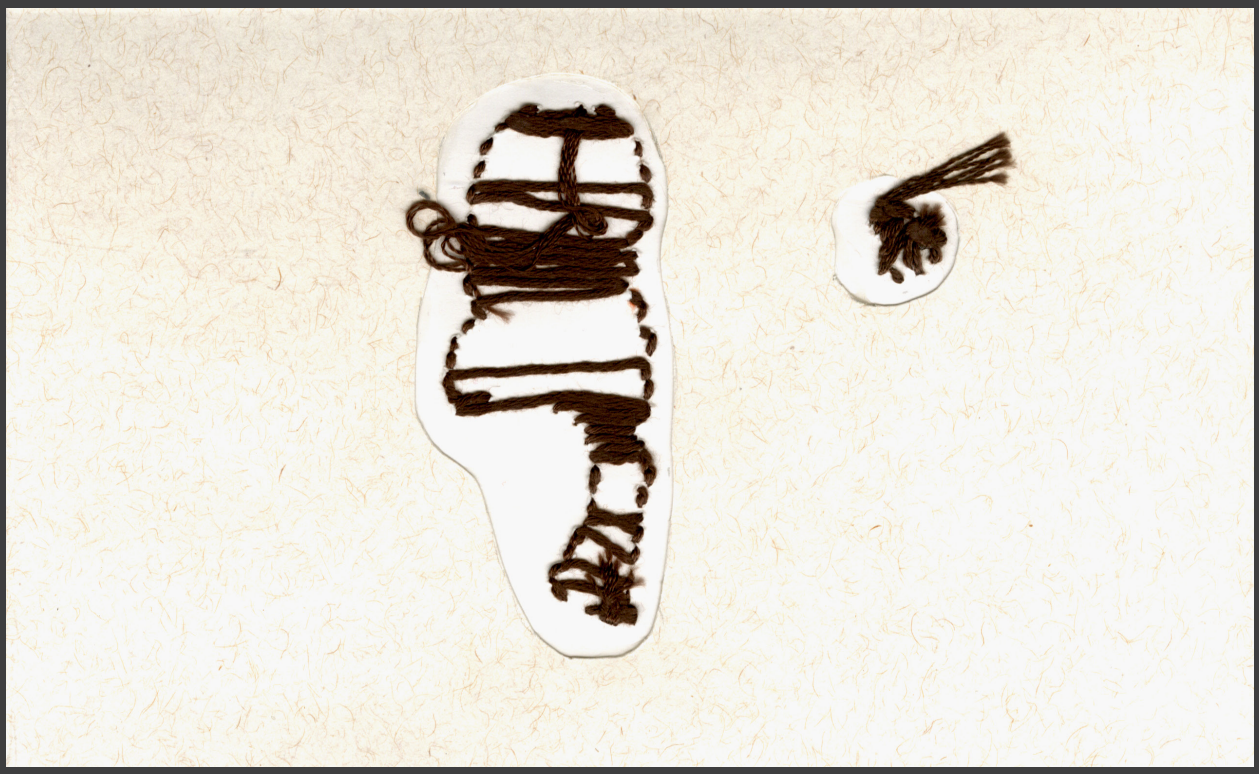










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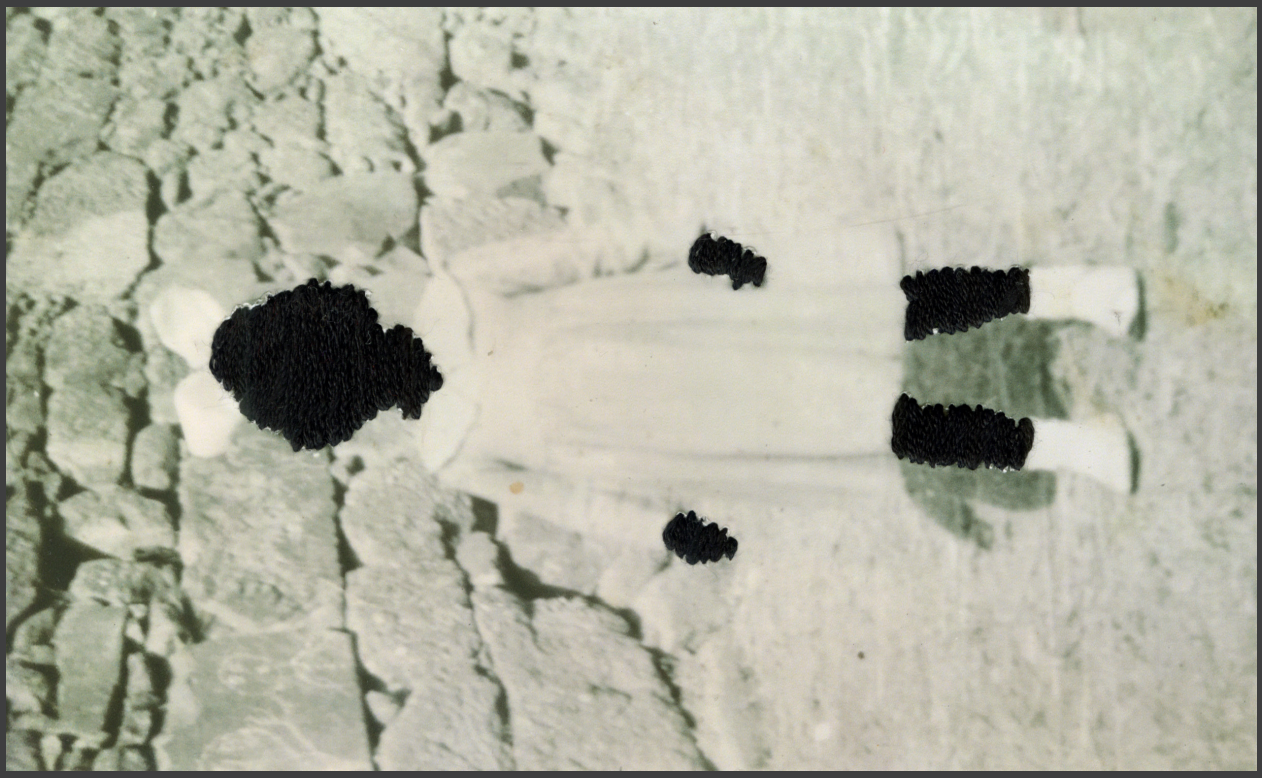
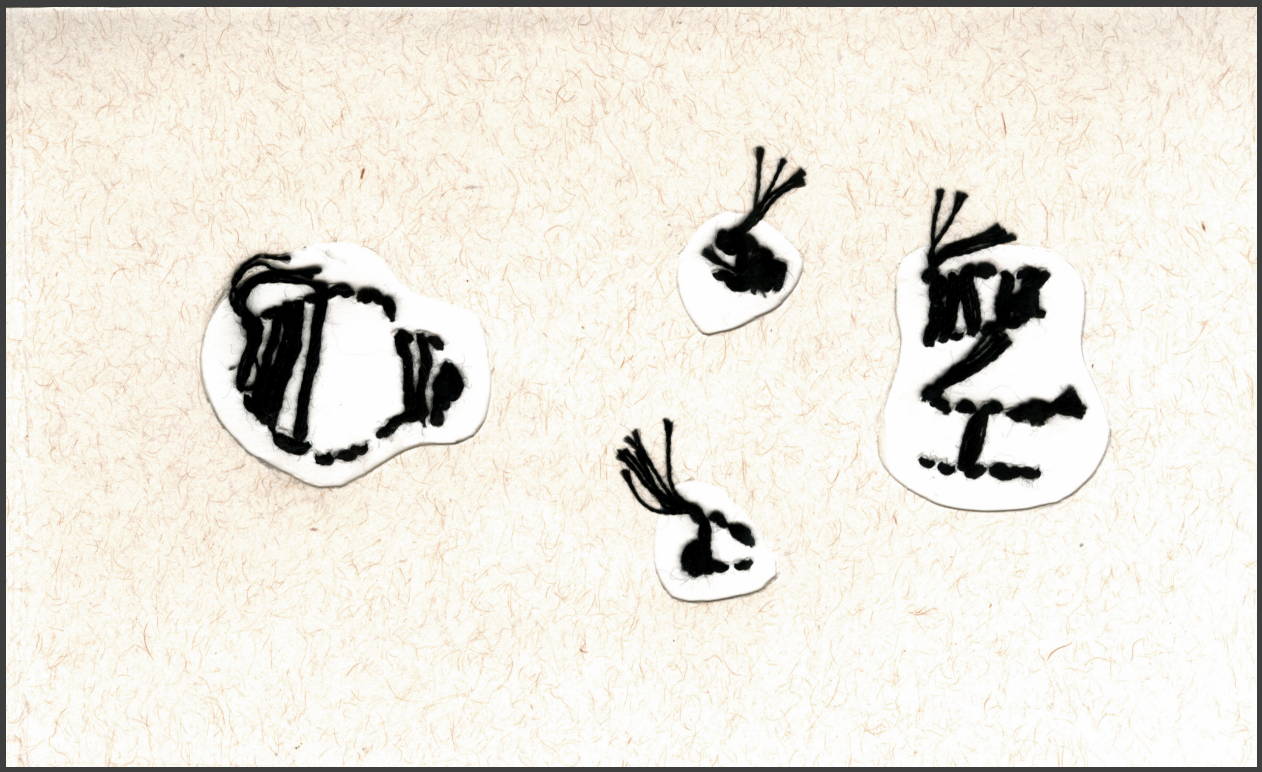




Marseille, France

The Persistence of Memory

While I have never had a particularly good memory, it has only gotten worse in recent times.

Looking back at the months after losing my grandmother, I can't remember many of the devastating moments of it all. Some stand out in my mind, like walking through the hospital to see her for the last time, the hallway leading up to the door growing longer with each step, and my hands trembling more than usual.

I remember not believing it was her in the casket at her Canadian service after seeing her still looking so normal in the hospital bed after she was gone. I was forced to sit behind my immediate family because the area was already filled. I remember collapsing on the concrete outside the church after the hearse drove away, and I remember my parents trying to pick up my limp weight every time I see the scars left on my knees by the sidewalk.

I remember the fear that struck me while sitting in the church in her home village in Vila Boa, Portugal, where people crowded my other family members before I could get there, leaving no space for me. So, just like our service back in Canada, I was once again left two rows back from my family. Listening to the priest talk about death in a language I was no longer fluent in.

I remember walking in the streets as part of a large pilgrimage with the people who attended her Portuguese service, all the way to the cemetery where we put her ashes into the grave of her parents. Again, people crowded the scene, unaware of who I was, and my immediate family left me behind in the crowd, almost like they didn't remember I was there.

The things I don't remember, though, were the details. The details of just how much I was left alone by loved ones while trying to help them keep it together. I don't remember what my brother and I fought about the night before her service in the village. I don't remember the disapproving comments from extended family about the decision to cremate my grandmother. And I certainly didn't remember that I left early from visiting her on what ended up being the last time I spoke to her in person, because I was seeing Mamma Mia for the first time with my friend at a special screening.

The funniest thing about memory is how quickly it fades. The visceral feelings and the dwelling on the details faded, the words faded, the actions

faded, and the feelings are all that linger now. I remember what I felt. But in many cases, I don't know if I remember much of what happened. I can feel things like the sound of her voice, her accent and how she chastised me as a kid fading. I wonder if frantic attempts to recall it make it recede more as if my brain can't process it in a panic.

When thinking about photos, used to help remember moments, can you remember the moment without them? Can you summon it up in your mind? When you summon it up, is it the moment you see or the photo? How much of the moment fades as time goes on?

In the same way, I wonder if my grandmother's voice fades more each time I try to summon it up. I wonder, does the act of remembering lead to a loss of memories?

In working with this idea, I began to take photos and gradually distanced myself from the moments they documented by recreating them through different printmaking techniques.

Printmaking is an age-old method that spans various specific methods and materials. Its loose outline involves creating a matrix depicting any subject and manually inking and printing copies individually. Traditional techniques include woodcut, etching, lithography, and engraving; for this endeavour, I worked primarily with woodcut and its modern relief printing counterpart, linocut, and etching.

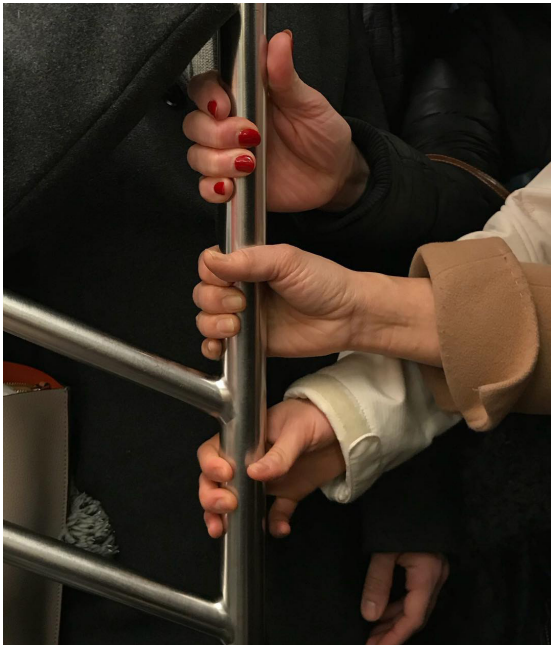
Upon returning to Canada and beginning the final year of my undergrad, my fascination with the strangers around me grew more assertive. My curiosity at the colour of lights in the windows of apartment buildings shifted from wondering what the residents were doing at such an hour under those lights to wondering about the greater aspects of their lives. Jobs, families, friends, where were the people on my train going? What was inside their to-go cup?

After several attempts to get a photo on the train that conveyed this fascination while maintaining some respect and privacy for the commuters around me, I resorted to sourcing a photo online to work off of.

I began with woodcut, a relief technique in which the surface of the material (in this case, a birch slab) is cut away, leaving all the areas to be inked, raised on the surface. That is, the white space is removed, and tonal shifts are created using various mark-making methods.

The first recreation was changing the photo black and grey and then flattening the grey tones down to only four, two of which were pure white and pure black. I adjusted the image from here by adding some information to make the shapes of the passenger's arms clearer through the folds in the fabric of their clothing.

Next, I was to transfer this edited photo onto the wood block. Using carbon transfer paper, the



Original photo via Hannah La Follette Ryan

Edited guide image

[1] Rubber roller attached to a handle. Used in printmaking to spread thin layers of ink.

initial sketch is laid atop the block, transfer paper in between, and the outlines are retraced, leaving the carbon imprint on the block as an outline.

Using these lines as guides, the material is cut away to create each of the four tones in the image. My rule for this was based on the frequency and width of the lines carved away. More lines or thicker lines were removed for a lighter mid-tone, and thinner, less frequent lines for the darker of the mid-tones.

Printmaking as a method also comes with some absolutes that need to be reconciled before working.

You are working with the material; it controls the outcome more than you do

It's characteristics are to be welcomed no matter how unexpected

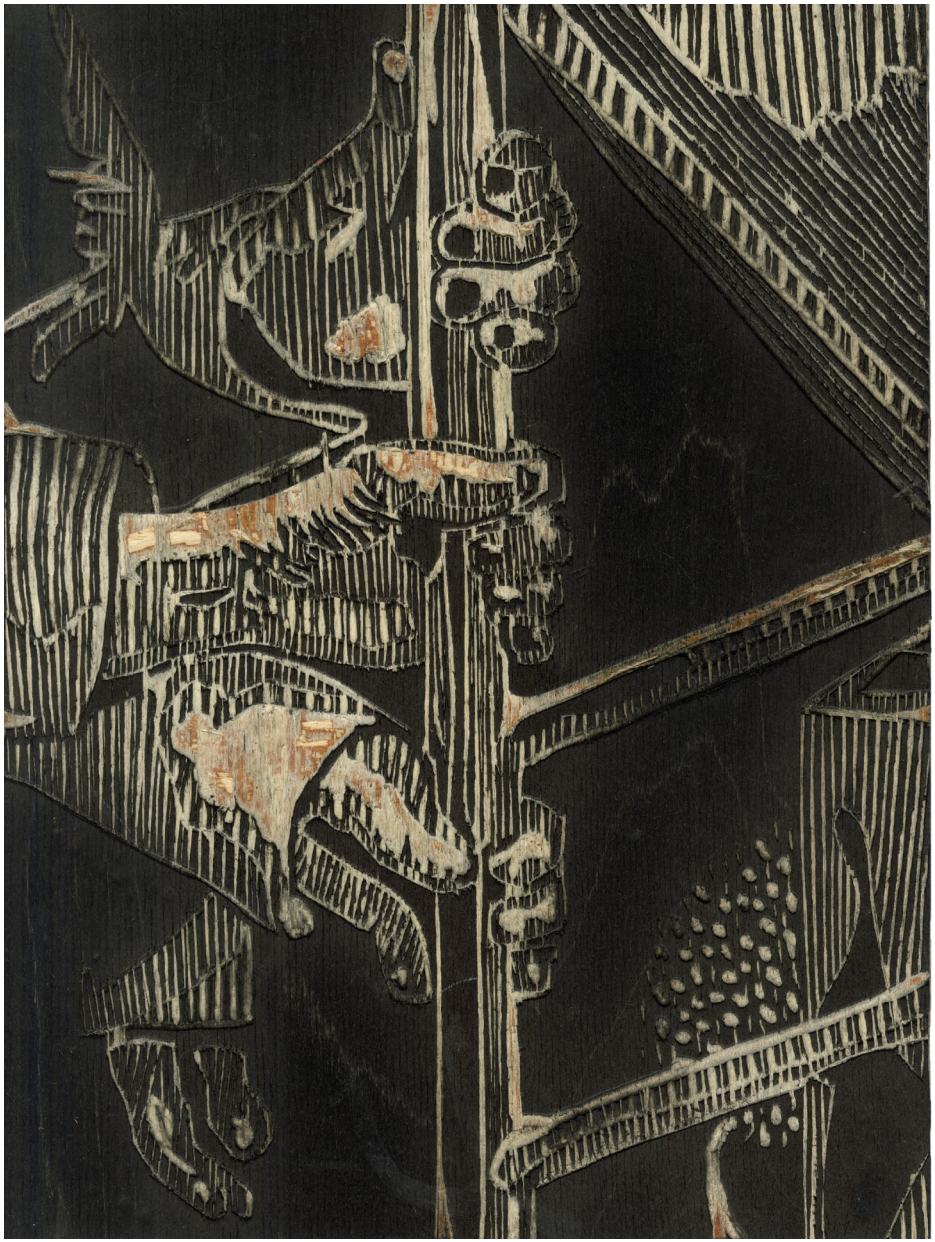
There are always things that are beyond your control while working. Developing a matrix to print consistently results in some unwanted and unexpected side effects that will appear in the final print. Of course, there are ways to mitigate this, which often require extra steps in prevention and adjustment after the fact. But in the spirit of finding peace with what I cannot control, I did my best and embraced the remainder.

In terms of wood carving, trying to force it to react to your blade in a particular way brings nothing but upset. I planned to work with the wood by making my most extended straight lines run along the grain, but with my diagonal and horizontal lines, I was fighting the wood as it splintered little by little along my cut marks. No matter how sharp my tools were, this was unavoidable, and I had to let go of my desire for complete control very early on.

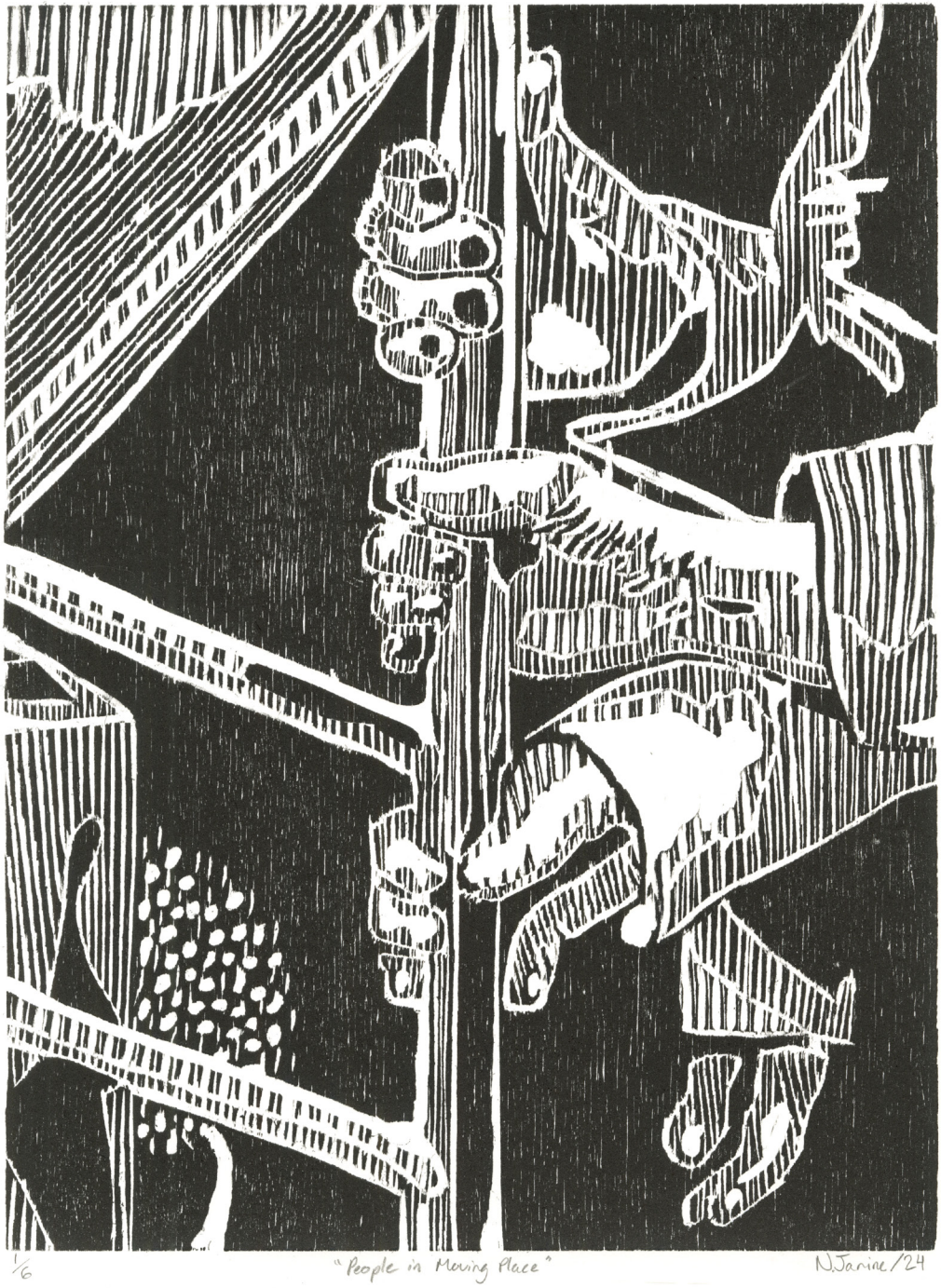
There are several visible places where the wood block splintered out further than intended, where the fibres were split down the middle, making the lines fuzzier. Several "mistakes" forced me to let go of the image in my mind and altered the final rendition of the image as a whole.

To print this, ink was carefully rolled out over and over with a brayer[1] until I achieved the perfect consistency, then rolled onto the wood

block. This is repeated until enough ink remains on the surface of the wood to transfer onto the paper using a printing press. The block is placed on the press with a paper on top before protective papers and blankets are laid on top, and the block is put through large metal cylinders under a set pressure.



Woodblock printing matrix



"People in Moving Place" Edition of 6. Final print. Oil ink on Stonehenge paper.

Reflecting on my trip, the evening after the funeral service in the village, I got on a bus to Lisbon, about five hours away. It was not ideal timing by any means, but with no way to change the bookings involved and no other dates available to hold the service, it was all that was in the cards.

With Lisbon, known for being filled with beautiful colourful buildings, as my subject matter, I dug through photos I took of said buildings, and just like with woodcut, I began moving through the phases of recreation to print it.

Moving into linoleum carving, my subject matter relied on my choice of method. Rather than a simple black and white print wherein the process is quite similar to that with wood, I decided to not only do a multicolour "jigsaw" print but to add a second layer on top of the jigsaw pieces by carving a second matrix containing details of the illustration.

Beginning with a sketch done by hand, using a window and sunlight as a lightbox, and then laying it over one of my blocks with carbon paper in between, I began to trace only the outlines of the buildings and then over a new piece of linoleum where I traced the details.

Naturally, I began carving out the areas that wouldn't be inked, this time forgoing the mid-toned areas and instead adding some marks to indicate clouds that were not present in the original photo. Once carved, the linoleum is gently scored in the carved space between each designated piece of the "puzzle" over and over until the burlap mounting can be cut and the pieces come apart.

The second matrix is then carved out, and the top half is scored and removed to save the unused material.

To print this, saturated inks were mixed to create one colour for each piece of the first matrix. This task took three hours, consisting of mixing and rolling out inks, pulling test prints, cleaning the workspace, linoleum, and tools, adjusting the colour, and repeating until I achieved the desired shades.

Once the colours were mixed, the ink was again carefully rolled out over and over to the right consistency, then rolled onto each piece individually. This process was repeated several times until there was enough ink to create an opaque shape when printed. The blocks were

Original photo

Base linoleum block matrix

Secondary linoleum block matrix

then carefully placed on the press and adjusted to fit together perfectly using the outline of the entire block on a piece of tracing paper beneath it.

A trimmed paper is placed atop, then the protective papers and blankets, and the block is put through the cylinders under their set pressure. Each print is left on a drying rack for at least 24 hours. I repeated this process about twenty times to allow me plenty of copies to work with on the second day of printing.

Day two entailed mixing new colours, rolling out the ink until the right consistency was achieved, and layering it onto my second matrix. The matrix was placed onto the press, aligned with the same outlined tracing paper that I used with the jigsaw matrix, and the dried prints from day one of printing were aligned as closely as possible to the second matrix; I added the protective pages and blankets and ran it through the press.

The workspace, tools, and matrix are all cleaned, and this process is repeated with the following ink colour.

By nature, using two matrixes indicates that there will be some misalignment in the print, another instance of not being in control of the outcomes. In addition to the general possibilities for mistakes, repeating the printing process twice and needing extra precision led to many letdowns for me when pulling my prints and finding just how misaligned they were.

"Lisboa" Varied edition of 6. Final print. Oil inks on Stonehenge paper.

I have not visited my grandmother's village since I was a child. While it has always been a small place, back then, it had a complete population of elders and young families alike—big festivals in the town square and bustling businesses—even summer tourists from countries across Europe. Nowadays, though, this is not the case. Children grew up and left for cities, and elders passed. The town itself was seemingly dead compared to what I once knew. I walked several times through the streets and was completely alone—a dog running by or a car passing through occasionally.

On one walk, I stumbled upon a car parked in a little corner between two homes. These homes are hundreds of years old, made of large rocks, and have been standing long since I last saw them as a child. This newer car between these buildings proved life was still here, although no actual life was present in the photo.

This photo stood out to me immediately in my shift from relief printing. I moved on to the printmaking technique of intaglio[2], more specifically, copper etching. In short, etching is a printmaking process where lines or areas are incised using acid into a metal plate to hold the ink. In this case, rather than removing areas that are meant to remain blank, information is added to the plate, and anything added will print.

Despite its more malleable nature, copper can cut through paper and even damage the protective blankets and printing drums if the edges are not prepared correctly. Edges and corners are beveled[3] at a 45º angle with a rough file, then sanded to creaWte smooth edges. Because any marks on the surface of the plate can appear in the prints, it is prepared by sanding first with 400 grit sandpaper and then 800 to smooth out any marks from storage or transport.

The surface is then polished carefully with a standard metal polishing compound and degreased several times using vinegar and whiting[4], a step that, if not completed correctly, can result in unintentional marks in the final edition of prints.

A protective plastic backing is put on the unused side of the plate before hard ground[5] is heated and rolled evenly on the polished and degreased surface. Asphaltam[6] is brushed onto the remaining exposed areas of the copper. These steps create a barrier around the entirety of the copper to protect unwanted areas from etching into the metal and appearing in the final print, which can take several hours to complete.

[2] The process of cutting a design into a surface. A group of printmaking techniques, including engraving and etching.

[3] Changed from a square edge to a sloped one.

[4] A non-abrasive powder of calcium carbonate used to clean and shine various materials such as glass and metals.

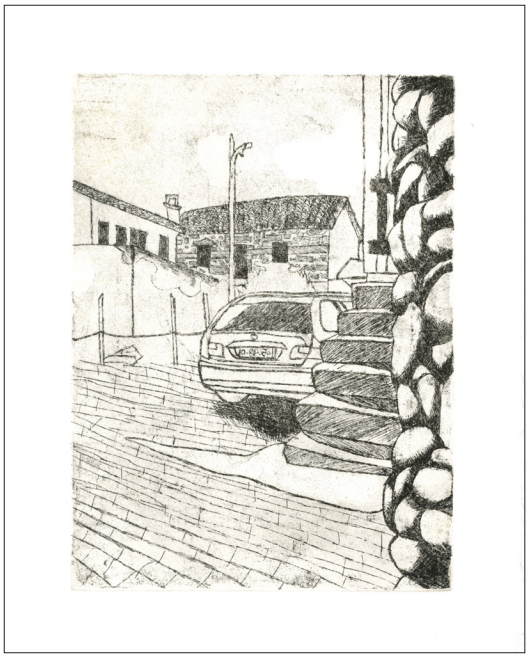
[5] An acid-resistant coating. Can be more or less malleable depending on the type.

[6] A natural tar-like substance that washes ashore from oil seepages beneath the Gulf of Mexico.

Original photo

Etched copper plate

[7] A thin open-weave cotton stiffened to give it more shape than gauzy muslins.



First state print

Once my plate was prepared, I sketched over the photo using a lightbox, laid it over my plate, carbon transfer paper in between, and traced it onto my ground-covered copper. From here, a scribe was used to carefully scrape away the ground material following the outlines left by the transfer paper.

Once sketched, the plate is placed in a vat of ferric acid, which will eat away any exposed copper, for up to 40 minutes, creating divots in the metal that hold the ink for printing.

After each step of the etching process, a "state print" is taken to see how the copper has been etched. To pull a state print, the ground and asphaltum are removed using mineral spirits, and the plastic backing is removed. Paper is placed in a sink of cold water, an integral step that allows the fibres to absorb as much ink as possible. Ink is mixed with a small amount of burnt plate oil to create an ideal consistency and spread over the plate in a thick layer, swiping in all directions. Then, the excess is removed carefully using a card.

The remainder of the ink is gently wiped away using tarlatan[7] and then phonebook pages. This process removes most of the ink from the surface of the plate, leaving ink only in the areas etched by acid. The paper is removed from the water, lightly dried with a towel, then placed over the plate, followed by protective paper and press blankets, and run through the press at a set pressure.

The process of pulling just one print for this plate took 45 minutes.

Etching as a medium allows for various methods of mark marking; another one used in this print was soft ground etching. Like hard ground, soft ground is more malleable, allowing the opportunity to use materials to imprint the plate with their natural pattern.

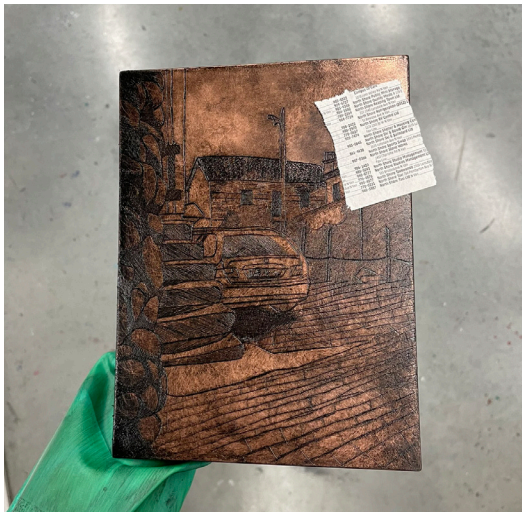
The plate is degreased several times, a plastic backing is added to the unused side, and soft ground is rolled on the copper over a hot plate, ensuring the ground fills all the previously etched lines. The plate is then placed on the press, and the material is placed on top. In my case, the thread offcuts from Reflections of Now were

used to create the bush behind the car. Another state print is taken using the same process as previously mentioned.

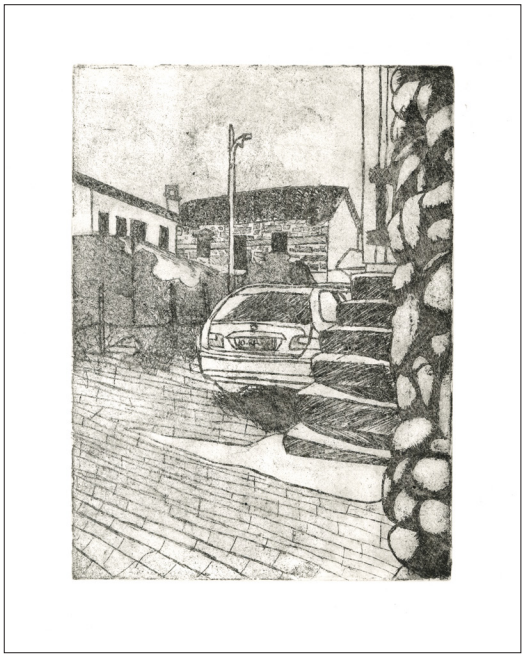
At this point, I ran into some issues with foul-biting[8], causing large areas previously etched to disappear, leaving no texture for the ink to sit safely. To resolve this, I resorted to a mark-making technique called drypoint, in which a sharp tool is used with natural pressure to etch by hand, recreating the lost dark areas.

The same process as with a state print is used to print the edition, cleaning the copper between each copy.

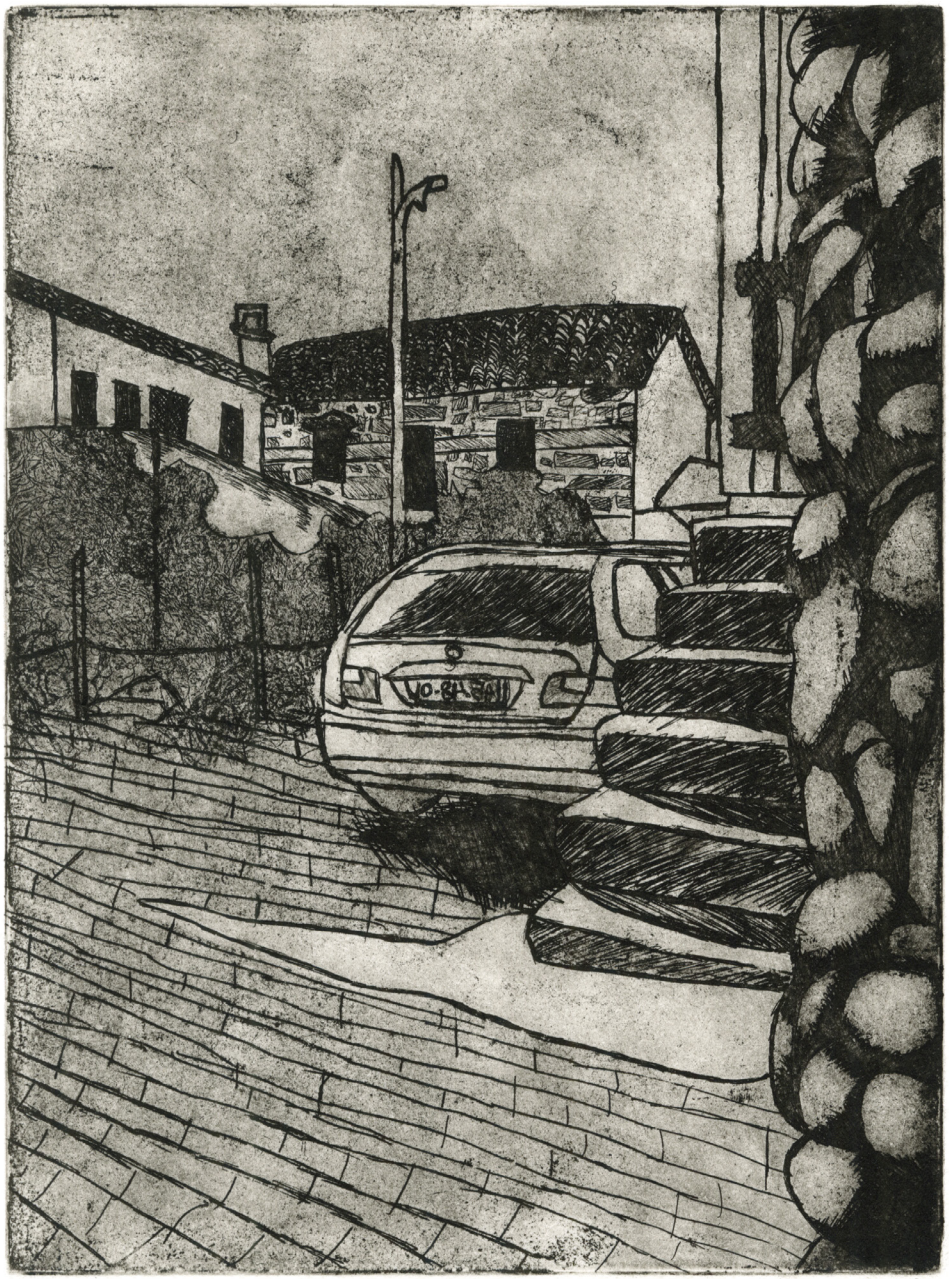
[8] Caused by a lack of acid-resistant ground in the etching process, allowing the acid to attack the plate indiscriminately, deteriorating the original design.



Inked and wiped copper plate, pre-newsprint wipe



Last state print



1/3 "Vila Boa" N. Janine/24

"Vila Boa" Edition of 3. Final print. Oil ink on BFK Rives paper.

Throughout this process of recreating images in so many ways to create the final prints, I was forced to surrender control of the outcome since the final print depended not only on my recreation abilities but also on the characteristics of each material and technique. I also found myself in a meditative state, repeating so many steps with precision and care. My memories were simultaneously mine and lost to the traits of time, represented now, not quite as accurately to the viewers of each of these careful editions.

The process of printing my copper etching, in particular, was fascinating. While I was working in a trance at many points, towing the thin line between over and under wiping the plate was frustrating. I found that on every occasion, from the state prints to all my hours spent trying to print the edition, my inability to pull a decent print was a boiling point of all the stresses and anxieties in my world. It even unearthed some of my initial experiences from nine months earlier, the day I dropped my family off at the ferry terminal. Alone, slipping past the mind of the only other people in feeling the weight that came with the passing of my grandmother, and left to my own devices.

Emotions I hadn't felt in months and was generally able to voice with some composure had come back with a vengeance despite my understanding that the head-on exploration of them had put me on the same level as the hurt.

Grief was still my maestro.

Thinking again about moments and how much of a moment fades or persists over time, this exercise of visualizing the progression and change of memories through recreation makes it clear just how much they change. Certain aspects aren't captured as perfectly as in the photos or my mind, but I can also see how new elements of these memories are highlighted through recreation, like the shadows cast by laundry lines or rock formations.

No matter how the memory is altered over time, it remains.

Madrid, Spain

Madrid, Spain

Barcelona, Catalonia

Past and Future *explores memory and the ability to predict life. A page for each year of my life leading up to the loss of my grandmother, and assembled using the Japanese method of Stab-Binding in a traditional pattern modelled after hemp leaves (my vice of choice in trying to quiet the mind.) I embroidered the pages by hand with threads whose colours, frequencies, and patterns denote the trajectory of my life. Reflecting on some of the painful and devastating events, as well as the joyous and simple ones, it explores how we can find inklings of our futures in our pasts, and how our pasts are ever-present in our futures.*

Once again, creating this book became a meditative act. Reflecting on the years that hold strong and weak memories (good or bad) and making careful choices on how to represent them led to a lot of time spent taking stock of my short time on earth so far. A runoff of this was thoughts about how this book might look for others, be that strangers or my family, who are still adding pages, or those whose books are already complete.

6-strand embroidery floss on Stonehenge Paper, Japanese hemp leaf stab-binding.

Vila Boa, Portugal

To Peel a Pomegranate

Old tales say that the way someone peels a pomegranate is how they treat a lover, but in general, I think it reflects how we treat our loved ones. And more so, how we treat ourselves, or should be treating ourselves.

Some people might be aggressive and tough on themselves, slicing a knife right down the middle, destroying the precious jewels inside, and wasted juice dripping across their hands. Some might pull it apart quickly, smacking the seeds into a bowl, and maybe those people need a swift kick in the right direction to complete things. And others, like myself, score the sections gently, and meticulously pull apart the seeds and skin so as not to lose a single seed or spill a single drop.

Calmly, and carefully. Taking the time necessary to complete the job, being gentle with every step. I don't typically treat myself in the same way, but I think I should.

Taking apart a pomegranate is a laborious task in general, but when you take on my method, it multiplies tenfold. It is yet another thing that has become meditative for me. And the night this week that I spent sitting in front of my window, peeling and looking out at the mountains when the fog cleared, the sound of the seeds snapping off their tiny stems was louder and louder with each section I worked on.

The tiny crunch, the sound of each one falling into my little bowl. So much happening as a result of such a small task. The simple goal of opening this fruit involved so many careful steps. It speaks to how much work goes into every little part of our lives, from maintaining things day-to-day to achieving larger goals. To be rough with yourself, smacking the seeds out or cutting through as fast as possible with a blade will only cause a mess to clean up afterwards. And if some juice is spilled while pulling carefully, at least an attempt to avoid it was made.

The actions were deliberate and careful, and shit just happened.

Sabugal, Portugal

Postcards to Nowhere

Cyanotype Photos on Stonehenge paper

Having visited so many places that my grandmother was so excited to hear about but was never able to, I often wondered if everything I wanted to tell her was lost to time. Using photos from notable experiences in my travels, at least one city of each country I visited, I wrote postcards to her about little moments I had experienced.

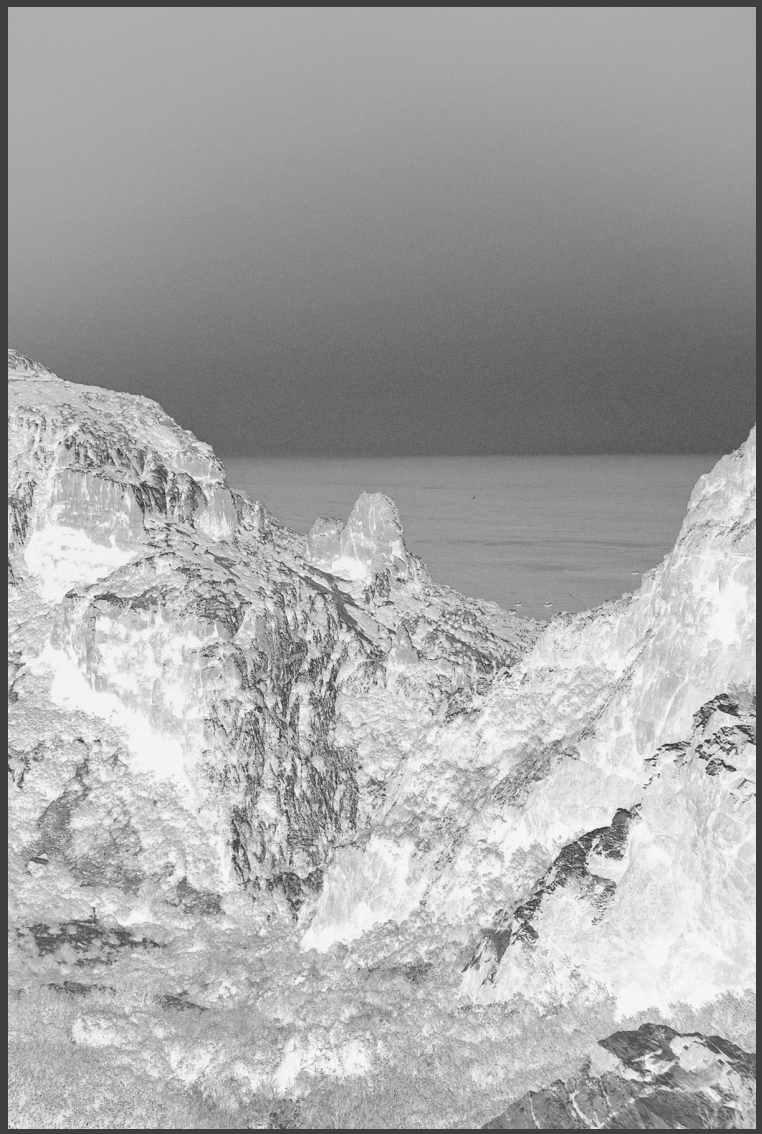
These photos, taken by me, were reproduced using the Cyanotype printing method, developed in 1842 as an economical way of printing photography. A UV-sensitive solution is created using a mixture of ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferricyanide, which is then used to coat the desired paper or fabric surface and left to dry overnight in the dark. Objects or photo negatives can then be placed over the treated paper and left outside to develop. The UV light combined with the citrate triggers a complex reaction between the iron and ferricyanide, resulting in a blue pigment known as Prussian blue. This pigment is insoluble, meaning that when exposure is complete and the printed surface is washed, removing all of the leftover solution except for the Prussian blue pigment, leaving behind the photo from the negative.

To create these prints, I chose photos from the locations I was excited to tell my grandmother about and created greyscale photo negatives in Photoshop by desaturating the photos and inverting the colour tones. These were then printed at postcard size on plastic transparency sheets, allowing shades of grey to print as different opacity levels of black and all-white areas as clear.

Barcelona, Catalonia

Lisbon, Portugal

Madrid, Spain



Marseille, France

Verona, Italy

Vila Boa, Portugal

Vila Boa, Portugal

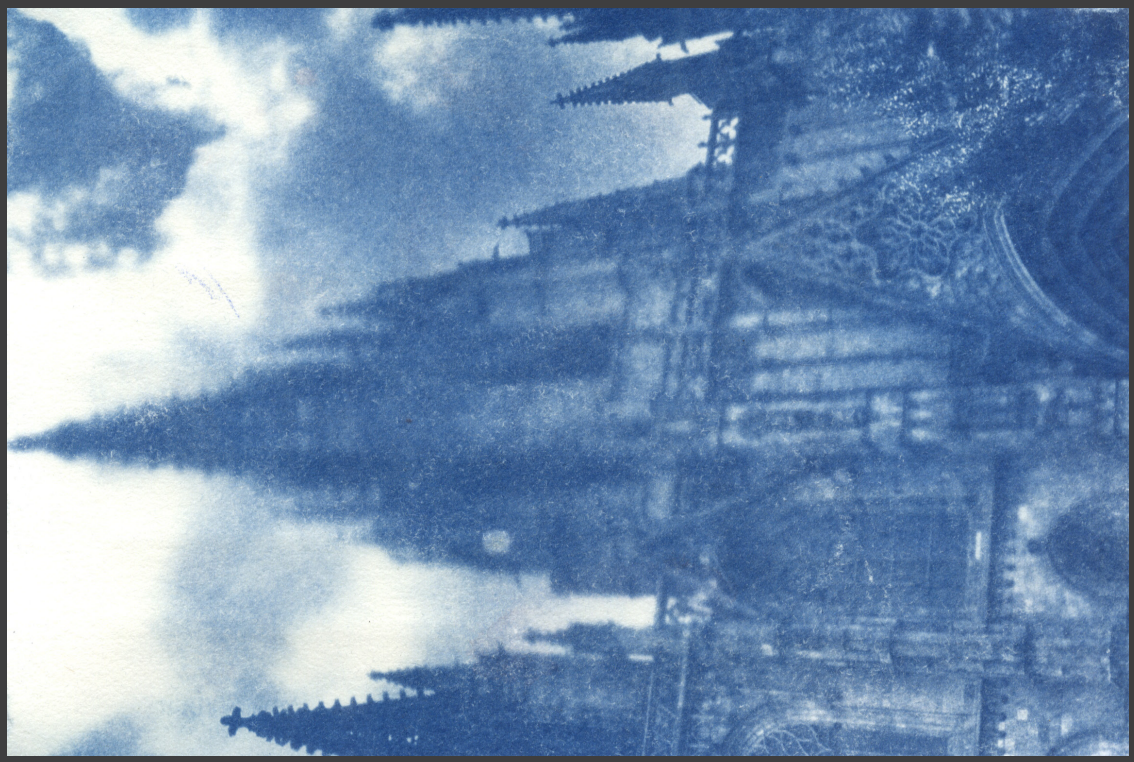
Vila Boa, Portugal

I created a dark room for developing the photos in the tiny bathroom of my apartment, using a wired rack to allow airflow around all sides of the paper after applying the sensitizer solution to my paper and allowing it to dry overnight. In the dark room, I then placed the treated paper on a large book, a piece of clear acrylic on top, and put my photo negatives on top, aligned to the edges of the page, with a piece of glass on top of it all to maintain even contact between the negative and the page. They were left outside for a few minutes, between five and 20, depending on the level of contrast in the negative and the amount of direct sunlight they could get.

After exposure, the pages were removed and placed in a 1:10 vinegar-to-water bath and agitated until the sensitizer was removed from the paper, rinsed, and repeated until the water ran clear to tone. To get a deeper blue on lighter prints with lower exposure times, they were placed in a diluted bath of hydrogen peroxide for a few minutes and left in the darkroom to dry.

These cyanotypes were then relief printed on the back side to create postcards, which I filled out with my thoughts on each respective location.

Creating these postcards fulfilled something in me, letting me get out what I had to say and feel like it was going somewhere. Now, however, being left with the postcards and nowhere to send them acts as an even larger reminder that they have nowhere to go, and although they will be read, it won't be by the intended recipient.



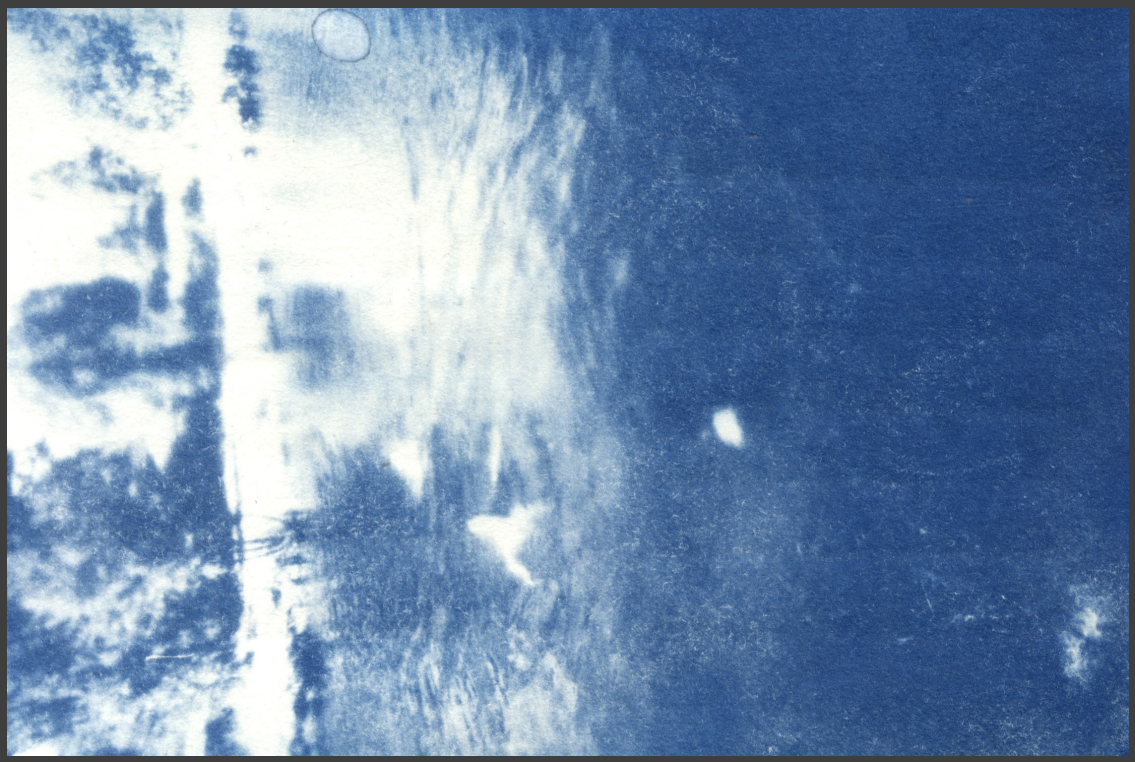
This giant Cathedral was right in the middle of downtown. A couple days later we went to this one on top of a mountain, we could see across the entire city! I lit a candle for you, like you used to help me do at church all those years ago.

To: Avó

From: Natalie

Barcelona,

Catalonia.



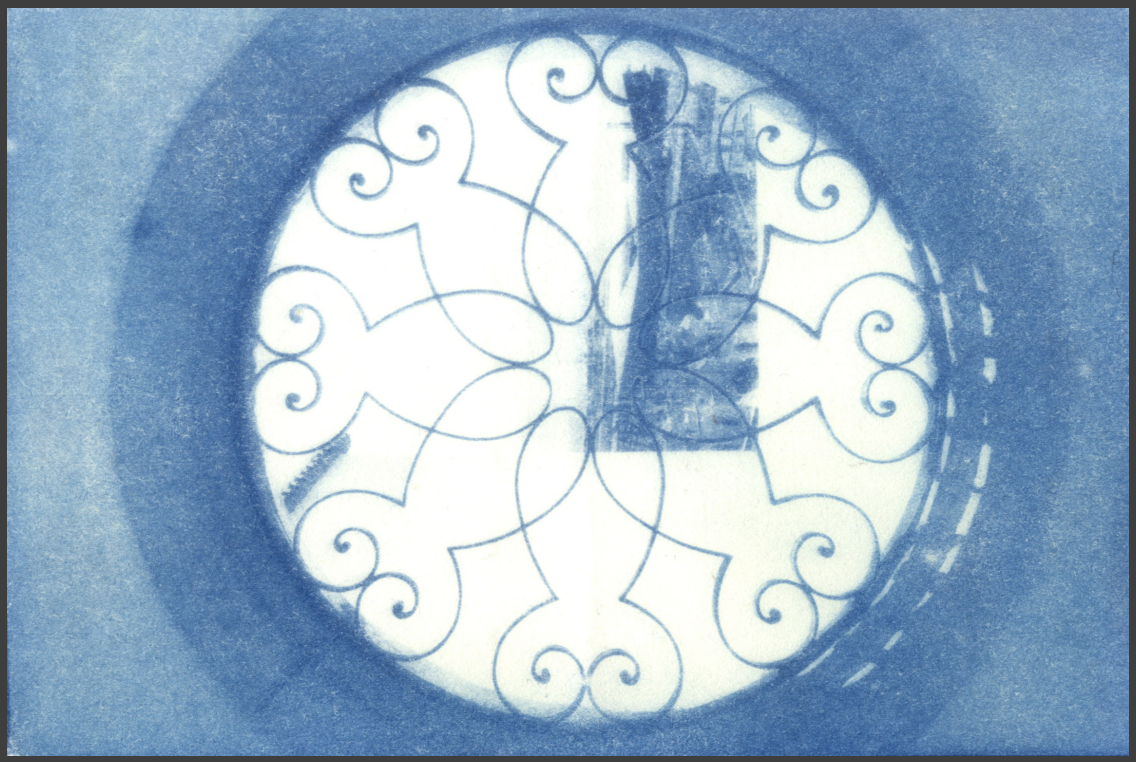
We went swimming at a river near the village, it was so busy! The friends I wanted you to meet wouldn't get out. Lucas is in this photo too, can you see him? He caught a snake! I knew it would have made you squeal. You and Mom are the same that way.

To: Avó

From: Natalie

Vila Boa,

Portugal



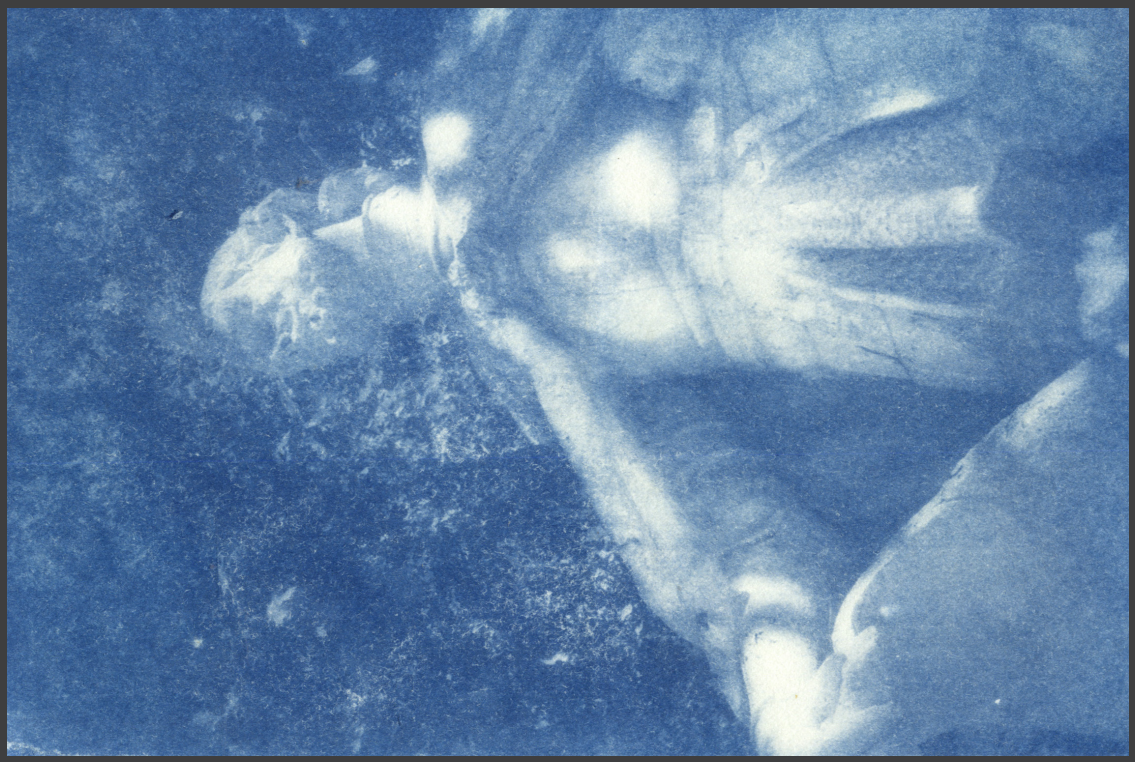
You were right about how busy it would be during the pilgrimmage. We saw so many priests and nuns from all over the world! It was almost too busy, especially after leaving everyone in the village the day before.

To: Avó

From: Natalie

Lisbon,

Portugal



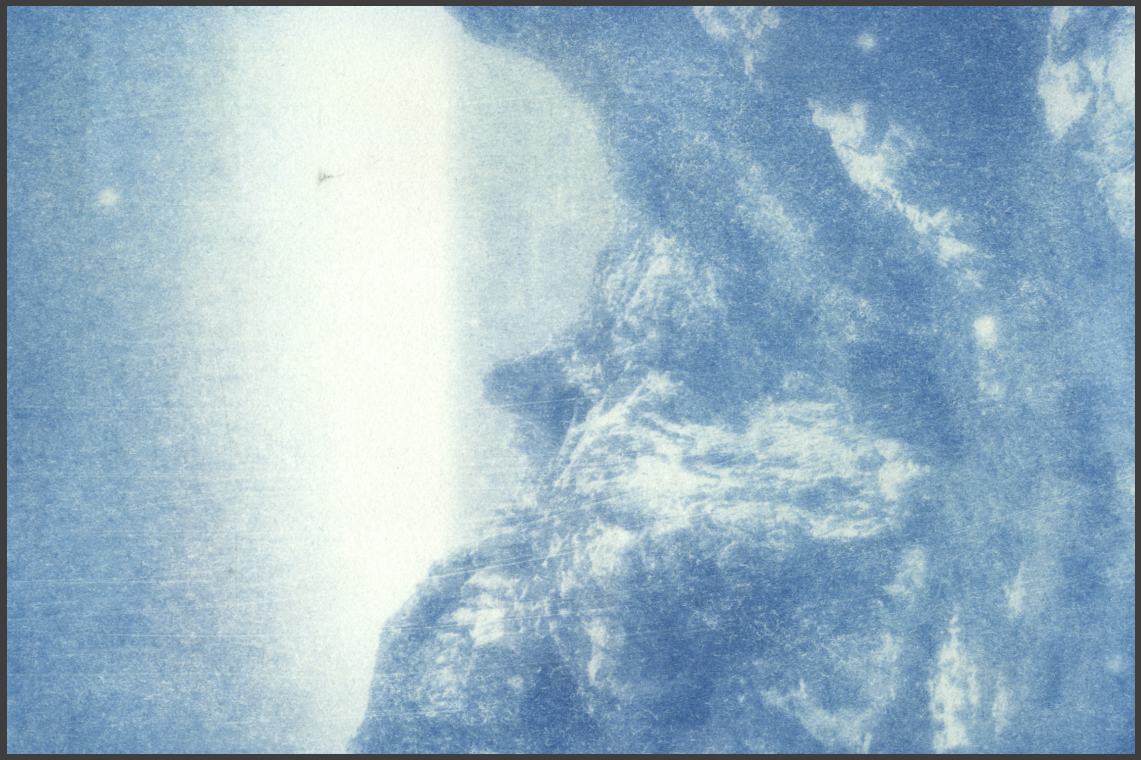
I love it here. I would move here someday. We went to the palace and there were statues all over the Plaza de Oriente. The birds seem to love them! They blend in so well I almost couldn't see them! The statues are their best friends!

To: Avó

From: Natalie

Madrid,

Spain.



We climbed through these cliffs to a cove to swim all day. We even jumped from the rocks into a really deep part! I ended up getting stung by a jellyfish! The quiet while floating in the water was nice. That was the quietest it has felt in a long time.

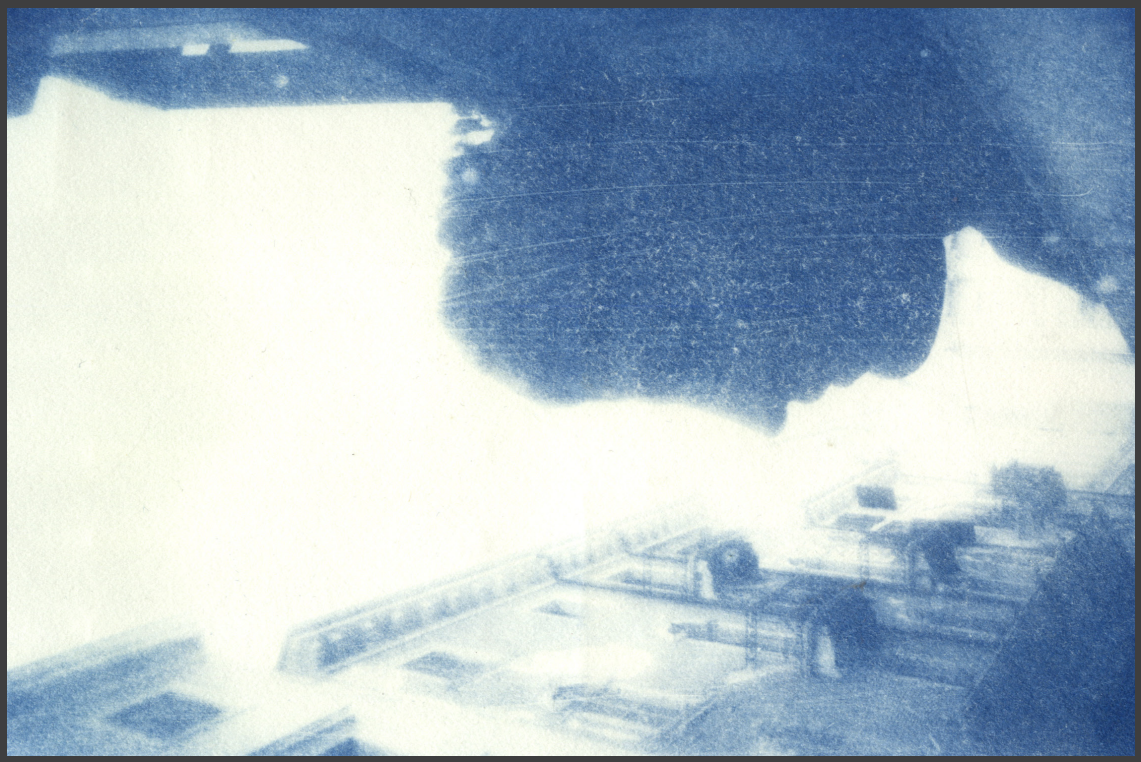
To: Avó

From: Natalie

"Les Calanques"

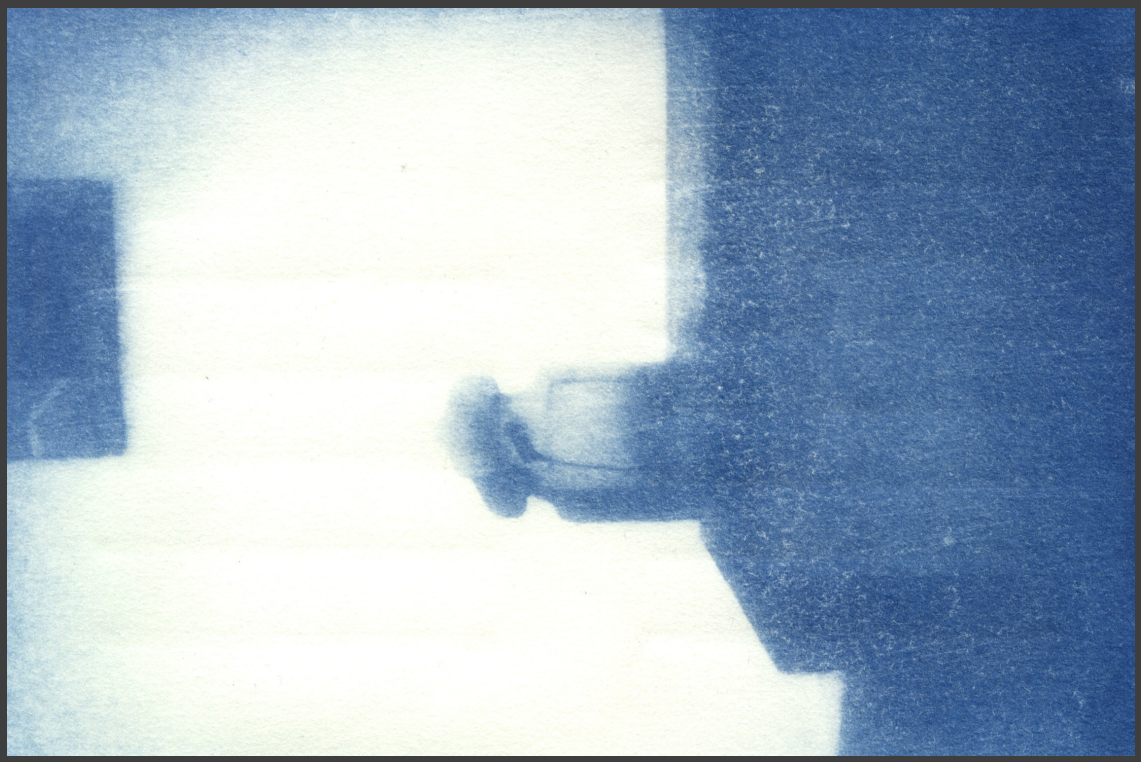
Nice

France



The city of love!
This is where Romeo and
Juliet took place!
We walked near the Verona
amphitheatre, I walked around
the corner and suddenly the
face of this beautiful woman
was staring at me. Her head
was the size of the buildings
across the ~~street!~~

To: Avo'
From: Natalie
Verona,
Italy



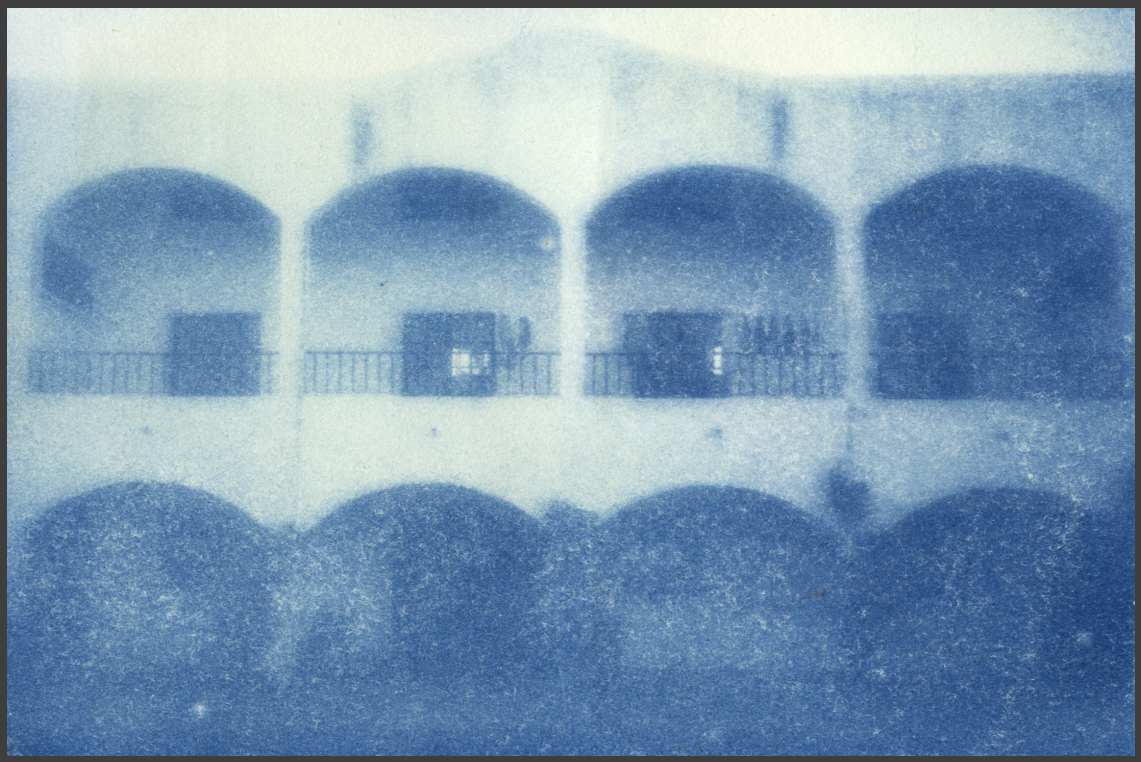
There is a photo of me as a kid standing on this fountain, do you remember? I remember sifting through rolled papers on the floor of the church at the festival to see if anyone missed their prize numbers. Your garage was filled with those prizes!

To: Avó

From: Natalie

Vila Boa,

Portugal.



I remember rehearsing for the festival here with these french kids on vacation. Where are all the tourists this year? Why isn't there anyone in Fatima's old cafe? Grandpa and I had a mini there. Those minis would be good for making your shandies!

To: Avó

From: Natalie

Vila Boa,

Portugal

There is also something about the fact that you, the reader, are now privy to a private conversation, no matter how impersonal the messages might be. There is something intrusive about your presence in my processing of this loss.

Something that I felt even before the idea for this work was conceived. So many people seemed (and still seem) to feel entitled to the details of my thoughts, the humming made louder and the weight made heavier by incessant questions and nitpicking for updates rather than a presence of support—the presence of everyone except those I wanted to be present.

Maybe that is how some think of supporting others: cornering them with a fake sympathetic look and asking them, “How are you doing?” and taking their “I’m okay” on their way, thinking they’ve done their part and been good friends or colleagues. As if the question “How are you doing?” warrants any other response, any actual response.

There is something intrusive about your presence in this.

Vila Boa, Portugal

On Grief

The thing about grief is that it never leaves you. I had plenty of happy moments immediately after experiencing a significant loss. I have had plenty of horrific ones now, almost a year later as well, and I expect to have many more as life goes on and I experience more and more loss.

Grief comes and goes; it is one of the biggest mysteries in our world. It tears you open and leaves nothing in you, something I was acutely aware of in the moment and that became increasingly problematic as time went on. I was often made to feel like I was failing others for feeling these emotions and the physical pain that came with them.

I felt (and still often feel) isolated from my family both in physical distance and in words and attitudes; after all, I was the caregiver who seemed not to need any care themselves, and experiencing the isolation and separation from life that came with the world-ending reality I was faced with. I was confronted with the fact that I wasn't doing enough to maintain the world around me, despite pouring everything I had into keeping up with my jobs and my degree, becoming distinctly worse mentally as a result, resenting this grief for ruining my life even more.

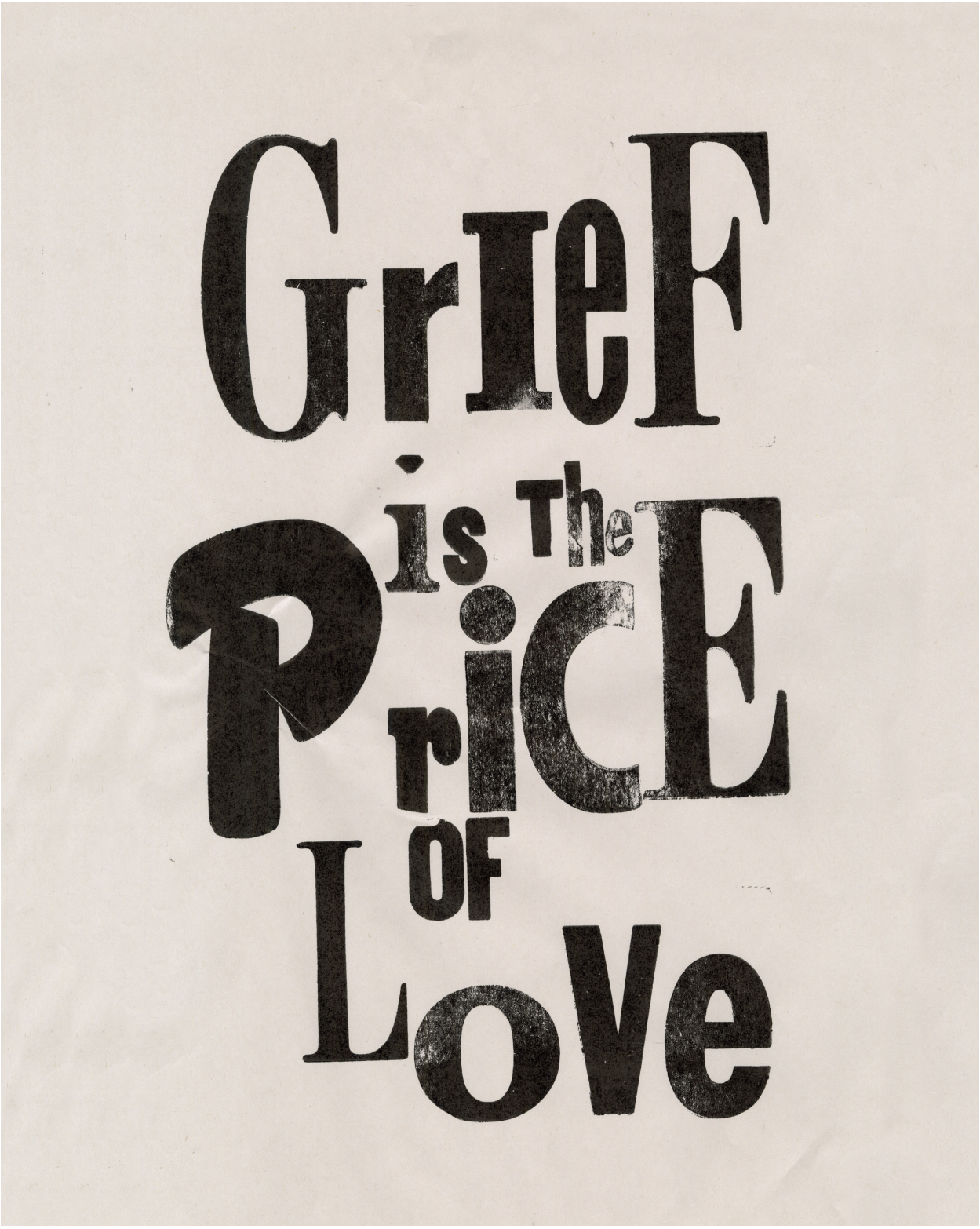
Looking back on it now, I don't find anything wrong with that grief. Those who have not faced it yet avoid it in others because it forces them to face the potential they'll experience in their own lives. Pushing away the pain that comes with loss does nothing but close the heart to love and compassion in the future, and that constriction of the heart in the matters of someone else's loss not only impacts them further but tightens the heart and reduces its ability for compassion in the future.

In all this, one thing is obvious: grief is the price of love.

GRIEF
is the
price
of
LOVE

This phrase came to me one day in conversation (utterly unrelated to my own grief) and stuck with me for weeks. Over the past few months spent printmaking, I decided to do a little typography exploration to lean into my desire to relinquish control entirely.

Using large bins of mismatched woodcut letters, I began digging and arranging letters to fit this phrase in the printing tray. This process was kept as simple as possible. I found the necessary letters, placed them without much curation, and then fitted the empty parts of the tray with spacers to ensure the letters wouldn't move while being run through the press. I printed this phrase on simple newsprint paper, usually used only for proofing prints, and printed it repeatedly until security kicked me out of the printmaking studio.


GrIeF
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LoVe

Lagos, Portugal

An Afterword

What began as exercises in an attempt to quiet my mind turned into so much more. From my life slowing to a crawl to being forced to confront much more than I planned to (or even knew that I was holding back,) the course of this work has taken a notable toll on me. Considering that by the time I refocused my research from strangers to myself and my family, I thought I had already dealt with the most sensitive aspects of losing a loved one; I was not expecting in the slightest to have a whole new wave of emotions wash over me daily.

This time, though, I eventually embraced it in all its sorrow and contentment alike, rather than pushing it away at every corner. In this, I have realized that grief and sorrow should be honoured guests. They deserve a place at the proverbial dinner table alongside joy and love.

Who stays for dessert is up to me.

Barcelona, Catalonia

I would like to extend another thank you to my family for their endless support in my work and to my friends, who have dealt with many mysterious ups and downs from me in the past year.

I also want to thank my grandfather for pushing me to go on the trip I was initially prepared to cancel entirely, and my grandmother for passing along her boundless compassion and endless amount of style to me.

Typeset in:
Adonis by Natalia Vasilyeva
Aktiv Grotesque Georgian by Dalton Maag

Natalie Janine is a designer who lives and works on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

With a focus on publication design and art direction, Natalie creates thoughtful and experimental work with a solid conceptual drive. Often tackling subjects surrounding greater social and cultural influences, they also explore the good, the bad, and the ugly parts of day-to-day life in all their glory.

With an equally rich and beloved printmaking practice, analogue mediums regularly inch their way into Natalie's digital toolbox, setting the scene for iterative work that helps achieve unique visual storytelling backed by genuine care and interest.